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ABSTRACT

An assessment of Groton-Lowell Upward Bound (GLUB) Program focuses upon the role and effects of counseling within the six week summer program. The analysis is chronological beginning with the initial pilot program of the summer of 1966, and ending with a review of subsequent programs through the summer of 1977. Brief outlines are presented regarding the characteristics of the student populations, responsibilities of counselors, problems encountered, counselor training, and the decision to go mobile. Several implications of the mobile format are presented along with concern for the Upward Bound mandate issued by the U.S. Office of Education. (Author)

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COUNSELOR TRAINING, SUPERVISION AND THE GLUB MOBILE PROGRAM

Introduction

The purpose of this analysis is to report studies that sought to evaluate and explore the role and the effects of counseling in the Groton-Lowell Upward Bound Program, a compensatory education program. Specifically, the research focuses upon Upward Bound programs which were developed and implemented as a part of the War on Poverty. The secondary school students enrolled in nationwide Upward Bound programs were selected for the programs based upon low-income criteria established by the federal government.

As a result of a zeal to show that academic achievement was being advanced by these programs, evaluation of counseling[1] aspects of Upward Bound programs have frequently been neglected or overlooked. Namely, there is a small collection of research that evaluates counseling, counselor training, and group counseling among Upward Bound programs. Special counselor training classes have been developed for Upward Bound programs by Young (1973), Caruthers (1975), and Allen (1975). Further evaluations could provide more information regarding counseling, and this attempt to systematically and chronologically analyze the GLUB program will hopefully provide insights for future directions of Upward Bound programs.

The focus will be upon the six-week summer phase at Groton-Lowell where students are expected and called upon to make daily commitments that include attending classes, recreational activities, cultural activities, seminars and tutorial sessions. The students are also expected to come to

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terms with rules and regulations, peer influences, and living as a community of people. Frequently, the presence of a student in an Upward Bound program indicates that the student did not make these commitments in the high school that he or she must return to following the summer program. However, an Upward Bound program has finer control over the student because of the Upward Bound counselor who has round-the-clock contact with the student.

Namely, the role of the counselor is an extremely important one, and the counselor has a powerful impact upon the academic, behavioral and social progress of students. The counselors are college students who are hired to assist in the development of academic potential and personal maturity among the population served by the program. Therefore, the sensitization of counselors to the economic, social, and cultural backgrounds of the Upward Bound students is critical towards staff functioning, development and organization. The objectives of the particular Upward Bound program at Groton-Lowell and the responsibilities of the counselor position will be described, along with evaluations of counseling-type services.

Upward Bound at Groton-Lowell

Helyar, Kolodny, and Mead (1976) were associated with the Upward Bound program located at Groton-Lowell. This particular program was initiated during the Summer of 1966 and involved 75 students and 15 counselors. The development of the program began as a collaborative effort of the Groton Private School for Boys, and the Lowell Public School System. The low-income population served by the program was typical of Upward Bound populations in that the students were recruited from deprived socio-

economic environments. The students were recruited from grades nine through twelve, and most of them were from one parent families on public assistance and living in subsidized housing. The employment problems of the old textile city of Lowell presented further hardships on these families. Family problems were numerous and encompassed such areas as physical abuse of children, child desertion, alcoholism, other kinds of drug dependencies, and promiscuity. Many of these problems affected the attendance and performance of Upward Bound youngsters enrolled in the Lowell Public School System.

The students enrolled in the Groton-Lowell Upward Bond Program performed at various levels ranging from poor to good. There were the distinct "underachievers" having produced virtually nothing as far as grades in school, but yet were assessed by teachers and guidance personnel as having the "capacity" to be able to successfully process the material presented. These students are the drifters, usually in school just enough to avoid suspension, but not really putting forth any effort within the classroom environment. This student is usually satisfied with a passing "D" grade.

Another type of student is the pacer. These students have a tendency to perform well in a few courses, and at fluctuating levels in other courses. Very often, this type of student has grades ranging from B to E in one or more courses. Clearly, if this student could be motivated to perform at a consistently high level, then full potential would be realized. However, students of this type often conclude that they can perform at a high level and upon concluding this, often decide to pace, or reduce the amount of effort that was put into a particular course.

The drifters and the pacers made up the majority of the Groton-Lowell Upward Bound student population, as is generally true of most Upward Bound

student populations. However, often these characteristics are attributable to newly recruited students, more so than to veteran students. Finally, within the Groton-Lowell program, there were a few students that could be described as average students who merely need additional support and guidance in order to improve average or slightly better than average grades.

The total program population consisted of drifters, pacers and average type students that were achieving some degree of success in the public school system. By design of recruitment patterns, the program sought to effect change in those students that were not performing well in school, by having the achieving students and the college-aged counselors serve as models. Thus, because of the low percentage of achieving students (average or better grades) the burden of affective and cognitive development of students rested upon the shoulders of the counselors during the six-week summer phase of the program. This burden of responsibility was not immediately apparent during the first summer of the Groton-Lowell program, but rather emerged over several summers. Thus, the program realized that counselors needed emotional and organizational support if they were to achieve any significant success with the students. Prior to detailing the organizational changes that occurred in the program, it is necessary to analyze the myriad of responsibilities and the individual differences of Upward Bound counselors.

Responsibilities and Individual Differences Among Counselors

The typical Upward Bound summer counselor is a college-aged student often enrolled at the host institution, and possessing a definite orientation towards higher education. Often, counselors are graduates of Upward Bound programs who have completed one or more years of college. Graduate students

are sometimes employed as summer counselors, but these students are the minority. Indeed, all of the counselors selected have an orientation towards higher education, but the responsibilities and individual counselor differences are important factors that affect the expertise of the counselors in Upward Bound programs.

Individual differences manifest themselves along several dimensions that effect the manner in which the responsibilities of the counseling position are handled. One of these dimensions is prior experience, as some Upward Bound counselors are asked to return, and often complete several summers with the residential program. Individual programs vary in the composition of their counseling programs, but there are usually several counselors who are veterans of the program. Often, the veteran counselors know what to expect from the students and the prior experience enables these counselors to deal effectively with problems that occur. Conversely, the newcomer usually needs some time to get his or her "bearings" and time is a precious commodity during a six-week summer program. Thus, experience effects the way that counselors handle their respective responsibilities, along with individual personality variables such as maturity, ability to communicate effectively, and concern for the welfare of the counselees.

Often, individual differences occur in the ability of the counselor to "police" or maintain cleanliness on dormitory floors, transport or assure that students attend classes, workshops, seminars, and tutorial sessions. In addition to these responsibilities, counselors are expected to control rule infractions, and if necessary report the infraction to the administration. When policing-type and rule regulation responsibilities arise, there are many situations where the individual counselor has to make difficult decisions regarding his or her assigned counselees.

Another responsibility of counselors relates to "recreation," and assuring that students participate in the assigned activities[2] that usually occur in mid-afternoon and last until supper hour. Also, under this same heading is "hanging out" time, usually occuring after supper and before tutorial sessions, or between classes. During this free time, close interpersonal bonds are often formed as the atmosphere is more relaxed and both students and counselors communicate freely and openly. Obviously, individual differences manifest themselves during this time, as some counselors might be able to communicate on the same level as students, much easier than others. The area that is of primary importance is "tutoring and academic counseling" as counselors are responsible for developing motivation in their students.

In most Upward Bound programs, academic achievement is the major thrust of the summer residential program. Therefore, counselors are held responsible for insuring participation in the evening tutorial sessions.[3] Counselors also oversee their counselees regarding completion of class assignments, special projects, and performance on quizzes and exams. Again, individual differences emerge here as some counselors might possess more expertise than others when it comes to motivating their respective students.

Conversely, student characteristics are considered when the students are initially assigned to counselors. That is, the more problematic students are usually distributed among the counselors with the higher levels of expertise. Thus, the role of the Upward Bound counselor is multi-dimensional and extremely stressful at times. Therefore, unless organizational and emotional supports exist for counselors, they could often decide to withdraw into apathy and retreat from responsibility. These

problems began to emerge during the first two summer sessions conducted in 1966 and 1967 by the Groton-Lowell Upward Bound Program.

Problems at Groton-Lowell Upward Bound (1966-1967)

During the first two summers, the Upward Bound counselors at Groton-Lowell encountered serious interpersonal problems among students, such as fighting, drug dependencies, and apathy. Most of the problems were difficult for the counselors to handle due to the fact that they had little organizational support for the social issues that surfaced around dormitory living and interpersonal contact. The main outlet for counselor frustrations, anxieties, and tensions was the director of the program, who was often occupied with administrative, budgetary, and organizational responsibilities.

However, during the 1967 winter planning stages, organizational supports for counselors were developed and implemented with a significant impact upon the Groton-Lowell Upward Bound program conducted during the Summer of 1968.

Counselor Training at Groton-Lowell (1968)

Historically, there have been few counselor training programs developed for Upward Bound summer sessions, and these have been instituted by Young (1973), Allen (1975), and Caruthers (1975). Bakal, Madaus, and Winder (1968) had developed a group counseling program designed to counsel groups of students at the University of Massachusetts Upward Bound program. However, the need was perceived at Groton-Lowell that training sessions were necessary for counselors to air feelings and concerns along with learning special training methods.

The 1968 summer program made arrangements to have a social work

educator provide counselor training. This rationale emerged from the earlier work of the educator in counseling at a summer camp (Kolodny, Waldfogel, and Burns, 1960), and was founded upon the notion that the role of the counselor is critical as he or she has the most influence upon the student. Therefore, the training sessions would not only help counselors understand and share the problems they encountered, but would also provide an emotional outlet for feelings and concerns.

The training sessions took place three times a week for a one hour period each meeting. A variety of issues from physical confrontations to developing "trust" relationships with students were usually discussed in these sessions, with the social work educator facilitating discussion and resolutions of problems. The educator provided support, encouragement, and advice to counselors. In addition, individual meetings of counselors with the educator were encouraged but were not mandatory like the group counselor training sessions. During these individual meetings some counselors felt more relaxed, and were able to discuss much easier their own particular approaches to interactional problems. Again, during these meetings emotional support was provided as the educator helped counselors explore management and resolution of problems, and their own aspirations and goals. The program staff felt that these individual and group sessions contributed significantly to the ability of counselors to deal more effectively with the myriad of responsibilities and duties assigned to them. These sessions were subsequently assimilated into the summer programs conducted during 1969, 1970 and 1971.

Head Counselorship at Groton-Lowell (1972)

Although the program felt that the group and individual counseling

sessions had a significant impact upon the summer program, the contact between the social worker educator and the counselors was only about three hours per week, and there was a need for additional organizational support in addition to the counselor training sessions. Thus, the 1972 summer program at Groton-Lowell instituted a head counselor position that would provide additional supervision and coordination within the counseling component. Prior to the incorporation of this position, the program director provided limited supervision on an ad hoc basis.

The head counselor was a three-year veteran of the program and instituted counselor meetings, developed a master schedule, provided systematic supervision, and placed the counselors in strategic positions which utilized their particular strengths. These structural and administrative changes led to increased efficiency within the counseling component, and the 1972 summer program ended with the counselors feeling good about themselves and the program. This design was continued through the 1973 summer program with minor changes, but other problems began to emerge within the program.

The Problems Continue at Groton-Lowell (1974)

Although counselor training and a head counselor position helped the Groton-Lowell program develop the counseling component into a viable part of the summer program, the program entered its eighth year of operation with glaring weaknesses within the overall program. By 1974, it seemed apparent that the program had become preoccupied with the counseling aspects of the summer phase and had not examined sufficiently other areas where problems were developing over several summers.

Ironically, the problems that emerged within this Upward Bound program were the problems that the program had been mandated to avoid. That is,

Upward Bound programs should be willing to develop and explore the use of creative and innovative teaching techniques, new instructional materials, and non-traditional approaches to learning. However, problems had slowly crept into the Upward Bound program at Groton-Lowell such that by the summer of 1974 the program had to deal with such issues as unexamined daily routines, the same instructors back with unchanged curriculums. some instructors overloaded with students because of their popularity, and too many instructors hired. In addition, other kinds of interpersonal problems had continued to manifest themselves and some of the problems in this area were student discipline, allocating proper study time, using free time constructively, and adhering to the rules and regulations of the 1974 summer program.

The Decision to Go Mobile (1975, 1976, 1977)

The problems associated with the 1974 summer program gave rise to consideration of a new design for the 1975 summer program at Groton-Lowell. During the Winter of 1974, a decision was made by the director and the staff to implement a mobile program design for the 1975 Upward Bound summer (Helyar, 1977). Basically, this design divided the students into six groups, each with ten students and two counselors. The groups rotated through six separate learning units with a teacher assigned to one site and a different group each week. The program design involved 24-hour contact among staff and students with academic, social, and personal agendas integrated. The mobile program was quite similar to the program implemented in 1971 at Claremont College (Lowenstein, 1974).

The six units designed into the mobile program were the following:

Survival -- 4 days of hiking up to 30 miles through the White Mountains of New Hampshire. Learning experiences includes making campfires, building shelters, first aid, and geology.

Urban Studies -- Trips into Boston to conduct interviews with city dwellers and to deal with urban living problems.

Language Arts - Excercises in the development of vocabulary, creative writing, and library research.

Inward Bound - Introspective analyses of decision-making processes and group processes.

Outdoor Science - Camping in tents by lakes in New Hampshire, including field work in the mountains, fields, and streams.

Research Skills - Digging out little known facts about the history of Lowell, and developing a paper around such topics as law enforcement, housing, and city government.

The mobile program was extremely demanding upon both students and staff, but the director felt that the advantages outweighed the disadvantages. Some of the advantages were:

a. A shake-up had occurred in the program, and the staff felt that the new routine was a challenge.

b. The units had produced academic output in terms of physical and mental work that had blended action with academics.

c. It was felt that teachers had more "contact time" with students and that more learning took place.

d. The counselors in the groups were clearer regarding their responsibilities and roles.

The staff felt that the disadvantages of a mobile program were:

a. Little or no interaction with other groups (some felt that this was an advantage because conflicts could be dealt with easier in small groups).

b. The groups needed to be carefully blended regarding age, sex, ethnicity, and personality variables, otherwise dangerous conflicts could easily arise.

c. Meals and free time activities have to be planned and certain responsibilities carried out by individuals within the group, otherwise some group members could get a "free ride."

d. Some unit activities were too easy and the result was boredom for the more advanced students (in a regular campus program, special classes can be developed to focus upon remedial, bilingual, and advanced subject material).

Conclusions Concerning the GLUB Program

The Groton-Lowell Upward Bound program has remained a mobile program for three consecutive years, and has attained limited success. The program continues to be haunted by problems not associated with the counseling component. One problem that is not handled very well by the mobile format is the academic individuality of each student. That is, some students have language difficulties, tutorial needs, writing and reading problems, difficulty with mathematics, and inadequate science backgrounds. These academic areas can not be addressed in a program that emphasizes outdoor activities as the Groton-Lowell program has for the last three years.

An examination of the six units (virtually unchanged over three summers) reveals that the survival and outdoor science units are involving the students in almost identical activities. The urban studies unit merely relocates students to a city that has greater urban problems than Lowell, while the research skills unit forces the student right back to the streets of Lowell that the student needs to get away from. The language arts unit is normally one where the student enrolls for the full six weeks because they are often grades behind in reading and writing skills. The one-week language arts unit offered in the mobile program can offer little towards improvement of these skills. Finally, the inward bound unit could be a once a week session designed to analyze group and decision-making processes. It does not appear to be necessary to devote a full week to the inward bound unit, within the mobile design.

More importantly, the decision to go mobile at Groton-Lowell has resulted in a de-emphasis on academic achievement which remains the mandate of Upward Bound programs. That is, the failure to include an innovative, creative and productive academic thrust in the summer phase at Groton-Lowell Upward Bound will almost certainly result in lower statistical measures such as percentages of students completing high school, enrolling in post-secondary institutions, and graduating from colleges, universities and vocational schools. These are the measures that the Office of Education within the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, uses to assess program success.

The Groton-Lowell Upward Bound program has taken a big gamble by directing the efforts of the program toward developing affective skills because the Office of Education has not revised the mandate for Upward Bound programs towards the development of increased affective skills. Indeed, affective skills and the mobile format are not the issues as outdoor classrooms can and have included mathematics, science, english, language, and affective skill development courses. The fundamental issue appears to be a philosophical change in the direction of the Groton-Lowell Upward Bound program. At the center of this change in philosophy are the Upward Bound students recruited from the City of Lowell.

The Groton-Lowell program admits to having to "work hard to recruit new students" (Helyar, 1977), and perhaps this is the core of the problem. That is, the program has historically recruited students that do not possess much of a desire to be encouraged to aspire towards post-secondary education. The type of student enrolled is clearly evident by the need for a completely "new direction" for the program. Perhaps an examination of the recruitment efforts and patterns would reveal that there are students in the communities

near the Groton school that possess more college potential and a greater desire to learn and take advantage of a strong, creative, innovative, and changing summer academic program followed by an intensive follow-up counseling program during the regular school year. In this manner, the trend could be reversed and the Groton-Lowell program would not have to change from being an Upward Bound program to an outward bound program. Replies and further discussions would certainly be welcomed by this author.

REFERENCE NOTES

[1]Counseling, as used here, regards tutoring, academic, and personal counseling of students. The various 24-hour duties of an Upward Bound counselor are demanding to say the least. Duties include maintaining dorm cleanliness, meting out scholastic supplies, motivating students to achieve, tutorial assignments both within and outside the classroom, solving or providing an outlet for the personal problems of students, and "hanging out" which often involves more than casual attention.

[2]In the University of Massachusetts-Amherst Upward Bound program, students are given a choice among various recreational activities such as karate, basketball, volleyball, softball, kickball, track and field, bowling, swimming, tennis and gymnastics. Participation is mandatory in at least one activity per day, with counselors responsible for insuring participation.

[3]Upward Bound-Amherst assigns students to mandatory evening tutorials with teachers if the performance level is average or below in coursework. The tutorials are the responsibilities of teachers, with counselors assisting where possible or necessary. Tutorials occur three nights per week, for two hours per night if necessary.

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